

Enjoy

eating together

Eating together is more than just supervising eating. Eating together builds relationships and helps children develop a sense of belonging.

Eating together provides an opportunity to practice conversation skills and learn manners. Children who eat with loving adults who are positive role models learn better eating habits and build positive attitudes about food and nutrition.

Taking stock . . . check your cupboard

Connect the topic to your life. What are your experiences, opinions, and concerns? What do you need?

Warm-up activity

Reflection: What did you share at the beginning of the workshop as the most rewarding part of your job, and which letter of R-E-C-I-P-E did you most look forward to learning about?

Have you also enjoyed being together at your table, sharing food and having engaging discussions? Have you felt like you belonged to this group? Has it been a good experience?

Assemble your ingredients and tools

Acquire the knowledge and skills you need to create the outcome you desire.

Watch and reflect

When children and adults come together to eat we provide *every* ingredient in our R-E-C-I-P-E for growing healthy children ...

- R** ... eating together provides the ideal setting for adults to **role model** positive eating habits ...
- E** ... in the **environment** of family-style meals that allows children to master skills in serving food and eating ...
- C** ... by coming together to enjoy and share the delicious and nutritious foods we **created** ...
- I** ... at family-style meals where children can be actively **involved** in food and fun.
- P** ... We want to encourage **parents** to have family meals at home because coming together for meals provides so many benefits.
- E** ... As you watch the **enjoy** video, reflect on the benefits of family meals at home and family-style meals at child care. Notice the relaxed, pleasant conversations, the satisfaction of personal accomplishment, and the pleasure of enjoying good food.

Create your dish

Apply what you've learned to create the outcome you desire.

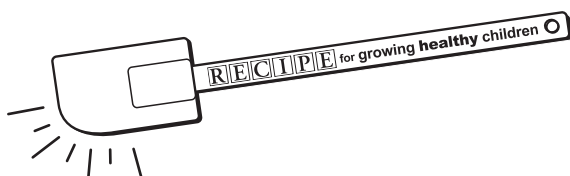


Table discussion

Use the following “conversation starters” to discuss what you learned and how you intend to use what you learned to meet your goals — respond to at least one question about each letter in R-E-C-I-P-E.

R — Role Model

What helped you realize that the actions of important adults can make the biggest difference in what children think, say, and do?

What is something you plan to do to be a positive role model?

E — Environment

What is one aspect of the eating environment that allows children the opportunity to ...

... build independence and skills?

... self-regulate how much they eat?

... build a sense of community and belonging?

Are there any changes you plan to make to the environment (including how meals are served) in your child care program?

C — Create

What are some practical menu or recipe changes that create healthier meals that are cost-effective, kid-friendly, and won't require more staff?

Which ones would you like to try?

I — Involve

How can children be actively involved at meals and snacks?

How can you successfully introduce new foods?

What is one new idea you would like to try for involving children in food and fun, either at mealtime or in the classroom?

P — Partner

What are several effective approaches to communicate with parents?

What is a new idea for reaching parents in your program that you intend to try?

E — Enjoy

What are some of the benefits of eating together?

What are some ways you can encourage the families you serve to eat together as a family?

What are some ideas for making your mealtimes more enjoyable?



Take your “dish” home. Share it with others, savor it yourself, and make it even better.

Accomplishing your goals requires moving what you learned in the workshop into the future . . .

- Take it back to your workplace and share it with co-workers and parents.
- Reflect on it personally and continue to learn more.
- Evaluate your progress on meeting your goals to set yourself up for ongoing success.

Define what you desire to achieve and make a plan to succeed.

1. Describe one way you intend to enhance the enjoyment of mealtime in your child care program:
2. Describe one way you can promote family meals to the families of the children you serve:

***Serve it* — A plan for staff training**

Select one or more of the ideas listed below to share with your staff ways to enjoy eating together:

1. Show the Enjoy video clip. You will need a computer and projector or a DVD player and TV. Discuss your observations. Discuss the benefits of family-style meals for children and families. Discuss mealtime “enjoyment” in your child care program. Share ideas for enhancing the level of enjoyment.
2. If you have provided training on the previous letters of R-E-C-I-P-E, use the conversation starters on page 2 to have a dialogue about each letter. This might work well to discuss your progress on goals you’ve set in each area.
3. Conduct an in-service training on family meals by using a presentation available at the Promoting Family Meals Web site (see resources list), including ones designed for school or community groups, or using the parent lesson.
4. Have a “family meal” for the staff, possibly as part of or prior to a meeting. Discuss the benefits of family meals and ways to promote family meals to the families you serve.

Serve it — A plan for promoting family meals to parents

A ready-made lesson plan to use with parents, titled *Make Mealttime Family Time*, using a facilitated discussion approach, plus all of the necessary handouts and visual aids, are available at the Purdue University Center for Families Web site at www.cfs.purdue.edu/CFF/promotingfamilymeals.

Also at the Web site are PowerPoint presentations with handouts to use with parents, schools, or community groups, plus links to other sites that provide parents resources for meeting their family meal goals, such as conversation starters.

Additional resources about family meals for parents are listed on the resource pages at the end of this section of the workbook.

Savor it — Enjoying eating together

Take time to examine your own “family meal habits.” How often do you eat alone or with others? Do you enjoy eating with the children at your child care program or would you rather not?

If possible, enjoy at least one meal a day in the company of others. Take time to truly “savor” your food and enjoy relaxing conversation.

If your mealtime routine is in a rut, try something new to create a different atmosphere — at home try adding a centerpiece or background music. Try eating in a new location. Get out your “good” dishes and a new tablecloth.

At child care, have the children create placemats and centerpieces. Try a theme meal at home or at child care.

Invite someone to join you for a meal. At child care, invite parents or another special guest to come for a meal.

Having trouble engaging in conversation? Get some conversation starters (see the resources pages at the end of this section).

Succeed — Set ourselves up for success

Individually, or with others in your child care program, set up a schedule for reflecting on your progress in meeting your goals. Do one area every month, so each is evaluated twice a year, or, do three or more areas every two or three months. Write down in your calendar reminders to perform these progress checks. Make copies of this evaluation page and date and record the progress you make.

Date of evaluation: _____ Evaluator: _____

1. Describe one or more ways we enhanced the enjoyment of mealtime in our child care program:
2. Describe one or more ways we promoted family meals to the families of the children we serve. What feedback have we received from parents?
3. Did we have a staff meeting or in-service training about family meals?
How did it go?
4. How have I improved my “family meal habits”?

References and resources

- The Purdue University Center for Families Web site has information about research on the importance of the family meal and how to effectively promote mealtime: www.cfs.purdue.edu/CFF/promotingfamilymeals. The *Promoting Family Meals* project is described, and you can download a reference list of books, research articles, and lay publications, as well as PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and lesson plans.
- The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University provides resources at www.casafamilyday.org for “Family Day — A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children.”
- *Eat Better, Eat Together* resources are available for promoting family meals from the Washington State Dairy Council at www.eatsmart.org or from Washington State University at <http://nutrition.wsu.edu/ebet/toolkit.html>.
- Washington State WIC’s “Healthy Habits” Program has family meal resources including posters, handouts, and bookmarks available for free download at http://depts.washington.edu/tvhealth/healthy_habits_materials.htm.
- *Making Meals Matter* is a nutrition guide for busy parents from the Dairy Council of California. Available from www.dairycouncilofca.org in publications for young children and school-age children.
- “Meals Matter,” www.mealsmatter.org, is a Web site to assist consumers in meal planning. Hosted by the Dairy Council of California, it helps people find recipes and plan meals through an online shopping list, meal planner, and cookbook.
- Iowa State University’s “Spend Smart Eat Smart” Web site at www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsavings offers helpful tips for food budgeting, meal planning, and eating family meals at home.
- *Mealtime: Keep It Simple ... Keep It Fun ... Just Keep It!* from the Oregon Dairy Council, www.oregondairycouncil.org, describes the importance of eating together and suggests steps to make family meals happen. Other resources provide ideas for quick meals. Available in Spanish and English. Go to “eResources: Free Downloads.”
- The “Touching Hearts, Touching Minds” Web site at www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com has innovative nutrition education strategies and resources. Go to the “Emotion-Based Materials” section and within “Healthy Eating” are resources about family meals. This site also has excellent ideas for counseling.

- The California WIC Program, Family-Centered Education, has lesson plans, handouts and lots of helpful suggestions to extend the lessons at www.wicworks.ca.gov/.
- *Maximizing the Message: Helping Moms and Kids Make Healthier Food Choices* from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service at www.fns.usda.gov/fns/corenutritionmessages/Maximizing.htm includes several messages about family mealtime.
- *Cookin' Up Conversation*, ideas for mealtime solutions and conversation starters, and a tabletime traditions placemat, are available at <http://otherwhitemeat.com/>. Click on "Kids" then "Games and Activities."
- Screen-Free Tips (which suggest alternatives to watching TV) and Conversation Starters are available at www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrightthehealthyfamilies.htm. The "Eat Right Montana" coalition's April 2007 media campaign promoted "Smart Family Moves: Less TV, More Meals Together" and has these resources available on line.
- *Food and Family* magazine and regular mealtime tips are available from Kraft Foods at www.kraftfoods.com.
- Quick family dinner ideas are available at www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/. Sign up for an electronic newsletter "Beef Dinner Bell Newsletter" published every two weeks at www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/register.aspx.
- *Raising Healthy Eaters* is a series of sessions taught by Purdue Extension for parents and providers. Contact your local Purdue Extension office for more information. Includes ideas for parents and children to cook together. www.extension.purdue.edu/extsite/counties.shtml